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ABSTRACT

Spanish-speaking people constitute almost one-fourth of the American Catholic Church's membership, yet they have had little representation in the structure of the Church. In the 130 years of interaction of the Chicano population with the Church, little indigenous leadership has emerged from its ranks; of the 58,301 American priests today, less than 200 are Chicano. A study of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Mexican American people directed historical and sociological analysis toward the ethnic stratification prevailing in the Church and the resulting non-participation of Mexican Americans in its structure. Covering the years from 1848 when the United States took over the entire Southwest to the present, the study focused primarily on northern California. The study showed that the Church has reflected the value system of the dominant society, thus presenting political and cultural barriers to the aspirations of the Mexican which tended to alienate him from the Church. Although for many the Church existed as an integrative force which helped individuals survive the chaotic conditions of life, by and large its approach had always been paternalistic and its structured clericalism an obstacle to any meaningful participation by Chicanos. The Church must search for a new understanding on which to base itself, a model which can bring about a more effective pluralism of cultures, the indigenization of its leadership, and new forms of ministry which will provide participation by all. (Author/DS)

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ETHNIC MINORITIES WITHIN A RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION:

THE CASE OF THE CHICANO AND THE CHURCH IN CALIFORNIA

BY

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Paper to be delivered at the 7th Annual Conference on Ethnic and Minority Studies, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

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ABSTRACT

ETHNIC MINORITIES WITHIN A RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION: THE CASE OF THE CHICANO AND THE CHURCH IN CALIFORNIA

BY ANTONIO R. SOTO

This was a study of the relationship between the American Catholic Church and its largest ethnic minority, the Mexican Americans. The ethnic stratification which prevailed in the Church and its resulting non-participation by Mexican Americans in the structures of the Church were the problems which were subjected to historical and sociological analysis.

The Church, as a sociocultural system, reflected the values of the dominant society and, as such, it functioned very imperfectly as a "filter" between its own goals and the racial minorities within it. As a sociopolitical system it was found to contain dominant-subordinate relationships not unlike those of the society around it.

The result was the marginalization of the Chicano. At no time did this group have significant representation in the structures of the Church. Although for many the Church did exist as an integrative force which helped individuals survive the chaotic conditions of life, by and large its approach was always paternalistic and its structured clericalism proved an obstacle to any meaningful participation by Mexican Americans.

This study calls for a new model of the Church which can bring about a more effective pluralism of cultures, the indigenization of its leadership, and new forms of ministry which will provide participation by all.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, a group of twenty-two Chicanos from all walks of life gathered to spend three days in a marathon psychotherapy session near Oakland, California.[1] One aspect of this experience is pertinent to our study: the session on religion and the Chicano. Everyone was Catholic by tradition, but few in the group evinced any loyalty to the institutional Church. Most expressed deep hurts and, with some exceptions, there was alienation from the Church. The majority regarded the Church as an impersonal and culturally different institution. Their religiosity consisted in an individual and personal relationship to God.

It is the purpose of this study to investigate the nature of the relationship between the Chicano and the Catholic Church in the light of historical and sociological analysis. It is strange to say that, although this is a clearly problematic relationship, it has been little explored. In fact, there are few studies in the sociology of religion that deal with the relationship of minorities to to the larger religious bodies of which they are members.

Persons of Spanish origin, as the 1970 United States Census calls them, were officially 11.2 million in this country. Of these, over 7 million were Mexican American. Unofficially, the Spanish speaking are estimated to be over 20 million. As such, they constitute almost one-fourth of the American

[1] For purposes of this article, "Chicano" will be used interchangeably with "Mexican American." Normally, the former has a connotation of activism while the latter is a more generic term.

Catholic Church's membership. Yet, they remain an ethnic minority in that larger body. They have little participation and power.

The period of study begins in 1848, when the United States took over the entire Southwest--comprising half of Mexico's territory--and with it, all of it's inhabitants. These people were a distinct group, far from the developed centers of trade in Mexico. In California, some were landowners, while others were vaqueros (cowboys), miners, farm workers and artisans in the small towns.

Little immigration took place from Mexico in the decades following 1848, but in 1910, a turbulent civil war engulfed Mexico, uprooting families and setting in motion large-scale movements of people. Hundreds of thousands gravitated toward the United States, where they were eagerly welcomed by the labor-intensive business interests that were just developing. The new immigrant came from the central plateau of Mexico, encompassing the states of Jalisco and Michoacan, as opposed to the resident Mexicans who had tended to come from the northern part of the country. The United States Census estimated that, while in 1910 there had been 367,510 Mexicans in the United States, there were 700,541 by 1920 and 1,422,533 by 1930 (United States Census, 1930, 2:32). During the depression of the 1930's, this immigration ceased. American authorities began a program of forced repatriation. Many who had been born in the United States were also sent to Mexico.

With the outbreak of World War II, the need for low paid labor again

surfaced and another phase of immigration began. After the 1950's, millions came in without benefit of documents or contract. The 1960s became a period of overt unrest and of demonstration against what were considered to be oppressive institutions--including the Church.

The questions that guided the process of this research were: Why did the Church differ so little in its treatment of Mexican Americans as a subordinate group? Did it impose the dominant culture upon them? If so, why was there so little resistance by the Mexican American? What structural change is taking place in the Catholic Church that might enable Chicanos to begin to develop new forms of ministry to themselves and the world about them?

The historical investigation covered 100 percent of the time that the Chicano interacted with the Church: from 1848 until the present. The focus of the study was on northern California, where one could see, in microcosm, the coming together of two great cultures, at first in conflict and then in accomodation. An in-depth study was made of various communities such as the one that developed in the New Almadén mines near San José between 1848 and 1910. After that date, attention is shifted to the Mexican in east San Jose and throughout central California.

The sociological aspect of the work dealt with the marginalization of the Mexican American with respect to both American society and the Church. Specific attention was paid to the ethnic stratification that occurred and to an analysis of the origins of this phenomenon with respect to power-wielding groups. The Church was seen both in its sociocultural and its sociopolitical

aspects. No attempt was made, however, to reduce the totality of the Church's reality to scientific terms, nor to minimize the positive contributions it has made to the integration of society. Instead, a frank analysis was made of how the Church impinged upon the culture, social status, and religious feeling of the Mexican American. The Church was also judged in the light of its own supra-empirical goals such as its servanthood to people and as a community of faith and love.

The subordinate role taken by Mexican Americans was greatly stressed. Subordinate status refers to the relatively lower position of one group, as a group, with respect to others in a system of differential ranking. Conversely, dominant status refers to the higher ranking of other groups.

An important distinction also has to be made with regard to minority groups. There are those who came here for the same reason as the dominant white: for political asylum, religious freedom or economic betterment. Such would be Americans or European extraction and the Asians. Others were incorporated into the United States more or less against their will. Such would be the American Indians, who were already here, the Mexican Americans who became such by conquest and the Afro-Americans who were brought here by force. The first group is sometimes called " immigrant minorities" while the second is called "subordinate minorities" (Ogbu 1974:2).

The problem is a deep one involving the processes of subordination and inferiorization. One of its expressions is the little indigenous leadership that has emerged from the ranks of the Chicano population in the 130 years of its interaction with the Church. Thus, of the 58,301 American priests

today, less than 200 are Chicano. There are 385 other hispanic priests who have been recruited from Spain and Latin America. The number of hispanic nuns is unknown because of the large and varied number of religious orders and because of the fact that, traditionally, young women adopt a new first name upon entering a religious order and do not use their last name. Their percentage of the total, however, is not estimated to be much higher than that of the men. The first Chicano, or Spanish-surnamed bishop was not named until 1970. After that, intense pressure from Chicanos within the Church brought about the naming of seven others. Even at this, hispanic bishops still only contribute 2.5 percent of the total number of American bishops. By contrast, the Irish, who are 17 percent of the American Catholic population, have 35 percent of the priests and 50 percent of the hierarchy.

THE ROOTS OF ETHNIC STRATIFICATION: NORTHERN CALIFORNIA, 1848-1910

The Chicano entered American history as a minority subordinated by conquest. The social, political and economic dimension of that status was added in the decades that followed. Ethnicity and race became important ingredients of the process of domination that ensued.

The preconditions of this subordination, however, were laid long before 1848. Spain had laid claim to California in the sixteenth century, but it was not until the eighteenth century that actual possession was taken of it. Cross and crown then combined to bring the "benefits of civilization" and Christianity

to the California inhabitants. In 1769, the Franciscan missionaries began a line of missions that was to stretch from San Diego to Sonoma, north of San Francisco. Large numbers of Indians were induced to take up residence in the missions and learn the trades of the time. Colonization, however, was not attempted until the De Anza expeditions were undertaken in 1776. The first civilian pueblo, San José, was established in 1777. By 1848, however, California had still not progressed beyond the agricultural and pastoral stage of economy as the Industrial Revolution had not yet touched Spain or Mexico.

The Church had been a dominant force during the mission days, but after Mexico's war of independence from Spain and the onslaught of anti-clericalism, its power waned. The Spanish clergy, upon which the Church had been so dependent, was banished in 1827. The California missionaries were almost entirely Spanish and had to depart. Their places were taken by Mexican priests.

The Mexican population of California in 1848 consisted of the Californio class -- mostly landowners and Spaniards who considered themselves of a higher social class -- and the vaquero class, which was looked upon as a mestizo of mixed breed, and the Indians. Increased members of this mestizo class had already begun to immigrate from Sonora to California, long before the coming of the Americans. The total number of the California population, however, was not large. Rodman Paul (1971:41) estimates that in 1848, it was not more than 14,000 exclusive of Indians.

With the discovery of gold in January of 1848, California was radically transformed. People poured into northern California from all parts of the world. This continued even after the gold diggings had begun to give out. Thus, while in 1860 the nine counties bordering the San Francisco Bay had a population of 114,070, the same area had 265,808 by 1870 -- almost half of the entire population of California (Kinnard 1966, 2:49).

Outside of the native Californians, resident Mexicans and immigrant Americans, the first ones from outside the area to hear of the gold finds were Mexicans from the state of Sonora, Mexico. Records show that four thousand Sonorans left their homeland in 1849 (Aguilar 1849). The darker skin and lower social class of many of these caused them to be looked down upon by both Californio and American. The situation was not helped when the Sonorans, as experienced miners, began to out-distance their European-American counterparts in bringing in the gold. It was not long before they were driven from the diggings. Josiah Royce, a traveler through northern California during this period, was to write later with irony:

> It was considered safe by an average lynching jury to convict a "greaser" on very modest evidence...One could see his guilt so plainly written, we know, on his ugly swarthy face before the trial began (Royce 1948:286).

The Mexican American seems to disappear after the racial strife of this period. Newspapers and other contemporary records take little note of them. While in other areas, it might be because they were overwhelmed in numbers by the incoming American, in Santa Clara County, at least, it was

more because they were given a low profile. Thus, the official State Census of 1852 (California 1853) gives the total population of Santa Clara County as 6664 persons. Of the legible names, 45 percent are Spanish surnames and the birth place that is given is Mexico or California. It is to be noted that the Sonorans are given a unique identity: over 230 individuals are cited as being born in Sonora instead of Mexico where it says "country of origin."

The religiosity of the Sonoran Mexican is often noted by travelers. In the New Almaden mines, every tunnel had been named after a saint. Various shrines to the Virgen de Guadalupe had been built, one having been carved out of solid rock 400 feet below the surface and its candles kept burning day and night. This religious expression, however, was not directly related to the institutional Church. It was a folk-Catholicism which had developed out of the people's indigenous roots and decades of isolation from the official Church.

The American Church soon took ecclesiastical control of California. Sporadic conflicts took place between the new American clergy and the few remaining Mexican priests. These latter soon returned to Mexico. The first archbishop of San Francisco, named in 1853, did bring in occasional priests from Mexico to care for his scattered Mexican flock, but his greatest efforts were spent in bringing in priests from Ireland for what he considered to be his dominant membership, the European Americans. Of the 322 priests who served in the Archdiocese between 1850 and 1910, 83.2 percent had an Irish surname. Of those with an Irish surname, 52.9 percent were trained in Ireland and originated there.

Ethnic consciousness was very high at this time and the Church responded by granting national parishes to groups such as the Italians, Germans, Portuguese, French and other nationalities. A national parish can accept members of a national group regardless of where they live, as opposed to a territorial parish which is meant to serve only those people living within certain boundaries. At no time, however, from 1848 to the present, were national parishes given to the Mexican people in the Archdiocese of San Francisco. Instead, the Mexican became an object of missionary care and a marginal member of the Church. Part of this was because the Mexican was considered to be small in numbers, but, no doubt, the race-superiority theories of the nineteenth century shifted the main attention to those of European origin. By the time the Mexican American became more numerous after 1910, the European immigrant had become established, and stress was on assimilation of any "new" groups into the dominant American mainstream.

THE NEW IMMIGRANTS AND THE CHURCH: 1910-1940

> "My son, there are three things that pertain to our religion: the Lord, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and the Church. You can trust in the first two, but not in the third." Thus spoke a grandmother to young Maclovio. In later years, during the revolution, Maclovio was to feel justified in arresting certain priests and sending them to jail. Some of these would be executed. (Gonzales 1976).

The massive immigration which took place from Mexico after 1910 brought in many people with attitudes such as these. Normal life had been disrupted by an internecine war and political life was seething with powerstruggles. Liberal forces took the occasion to unseat the Catholic Church from its position of dominance and proceeded to pass strong laws against it. Anti-clericalism was rife in the population. It was a chance for many to react against the authoritarian treatment they had received from priests. The revolution and social turmoil helped to release this sentiment and the reaction sometimes took violent forms. Others were intensely loyal to the Church and, as in the case of the Cristero movement, defended it with force of arms.

Through oral history, we get a sense, even today, of what those feelings must have been. The following vignette is a case in point:

> My name is Lucio Bernabé. I was born in Jalisco, Mexico in 1907. When I was a child, a plague of grasshoppers wiped out the crops around my area. We suffered for two years. Neither the government nor the Church helped. My mother gave us one meal a day. Yes, I was very religious and to this day I have never lost my religion or my faith in God. But since those days I have never considered myself a Catholic because of what happened in our village. Two men stole a cow and distributed the meat

to the people. One of the men went to confession to the priest. The priest said: "You must sign this paper." He then gave the paper to the sacristan and sent him to the patrón (landowner) marked "confidential." The patrón then had the men arrested. One was hung in the streets with the sign "robavacas" (cattle thief) and the other was taken to the hills by the soldiers and killed. When General Pancho Villa was informed of this, he threatened to hang any priest he would find. (Bernabe 1977)

Women had a more difficult time, especially if they had lost a husband or became separated from their family. Added to their life of poverty there was an inability to read or write for many. One of these stories is that of Gerónima Márquez. We can only include here snatches of her life story.

She became an orphan at the age of five and a "soldadera" (woman soldier) at the age of sixteen:

I must have crossed the line into the United States in 1917. I was only seventeen at the time, but must have lived more than one lifetime before coming over. The man I married (at the age of fourteen) lost his job when the revolution came. There was no work for anyone. Everything was dead. The landowners were in hiding and, when found, were killed.

My husband was killed in one of the battles and I was taken forcibly by another man. Shortly after this he decided to come to the United States. We went to El Paso, answered a few questions, paid two pennies and, right in the same place, were recruited to work for one of the railroads. We spent the day in the railroad section and began work the next day. Later we were befriended by a man who said he was going to Los Angeles and we decided to go. We left the railroad early in the morning and set out on foot for Yuma. We slept one night in the mountains and got to Yuma at a rock quarry where they were splitting rock for a new road.

I didn't know what to do. It seemed as though heaven and earth were coming together to crush me. I thought to myself: with the little I can earn, and the help of God, I will go back to Mexico. But later, with the help of friends, I got away from this man. When the missionary priest came by, I married another through the Church. Other than that, we never saw a priest or a church in all the years we spent out in the desert. But I always had my devotions and the basic prayers. One

practice I always had was to make the sign of the cross on the spot where I was to place my tortilla every day(Marquez 1972).

Despite the widespread dependency on Mexican unskilled labor by American agriculture, railroads, mining, and food processing businesses, there was, all the time, a general sentiment against the Mexican. American churchmen and laity were unprepared, and some even unwilling, to recognize much of an obligation toward their Mexican co-religionists. The Catholic archdiocesan newspaper of the time, the Monitor, gave little attention to the problems of the Mexican people, and seems to have been unaware of the large numbers of Mexicans present at any particular time. While there were zealous priests and religious who tried to help the Mexican people, and many agencies like the Catholic Charities and the Knights of Columbus expended relief funds, it was not uncommon to find overt expression of anti-Mexican prejudice in the churches. Bressette reports that, in some parishes attended by the English speaking, there were signs bearing the words, "Mexicans prohibited" (1929:19). In one church she visited, there was a sign hung on the last pew reading "Mexicans." The pew could accomodate, at the most, six persons. She reports that a missionary who visited the same place told her the sign was keeping Mexican people away. However, when he came to give a mission, he hunted then out and urged their attendance. The church was filled completely, even up to the choir loft.

The San Francisco Chronicle (10 March 1926, p.4) made public a letter which the Archbishop of San Francisco, Edward J. Hanna, had written to California congressmen. After stating the background for the congressional debates on immigration, the newspaper reports:

Archbishop Hanna sets forth the following seven reasons why Mexican immigration should not further be encouraged:

1. They drain our charities.
2. They and their children form a large portion of our jail population.
3. They affect the health of our community.
4. They create a problem in our labor camps.
5. They require special attention in our schools and are of low mentality.
6. They diminish the percentage of our white population.
7. They remain foreign.

While this document must be read in light of the anti-Mexican sentiment at the time and as an expression, perhaps, of the Archbishop's position as president of the California Commission on Immigration and Housing, nevertheless, it bespeaks a nativism not unlike that of the most outspoken of racists.

Much of the Church's work among the Mexican immigrants also came as a reaction to the "proselytizing" work of the Protestants. The Church, on the other hand, did not follow the lead of the Protestants in developing local religious leadership. In east San José, there were already two small Protestant chapels with their own Mexican ministers in the 1930s. Catholics did not have a chapel there until 1953 and a regular church until 1967.

A NEW GENERATION CALLS FOR ACTION: 1940-1960

The next two decades were marked by an increasing pressure on the Church to act on behalf of the Mexican American. These people were Catholics-or many of them had been--and they were poor. The Church was impelled by its own commitment to act, and because this group was now larger and more vocal.

Another pressure on the Church was competition from the Protestants. These had organized conferences as early as the 1920s; these conferences had been devoted entirely to a discussion of the social, educational and religious care of the Mexican immigrant. Seminaries had also been set up specifically to train Mexican Americans for the Protestant ministry. It was now incumbent on the Church to counter these activities and make its own contribution to the betterment of these people.

World War II mobilized the nation and a new migration of peoples began. Large numbers of Mexican Americans moved from Texas and the Southwest to California. Nearly 60 percent of them went to California between 1955 and 1960. As a result, the Spanish surnamed population of California grew by 88 percent in the decade before 1960 (Grebler, Moore, Guzman 1970:28 & 108).

Estimates as to the total number of migrants following the crops in the United States ran from half a million to one million. A large bulk of

these were Mexican Americans. Add to this the fact that, under the bracero program, an agreement between the United States and Mexico, an average of 311,730 men without their families were brought in yearly from Mexico to work in the fields of American agriculture. The immense wealth created for this country by all of these workers has yet to be calculated. Growers profited from the low wages they paid the workers and from the increased demand for the products occasioned by the war.

The first large scale meeting called by the Church to deal with the problem took place in San Antonio , Texas, in July of 1943. The following year, another and larger meeting took place in Denver. Forty-three persons from the Western states attended. Only nine of these had a Spanish surname. This dominance of Anglos in the Church's work among the Spanish speaking was to characterize its approach to these people in the decades to come.

The conclusions from these meetings called for economic and social betterment, but they cautioned against any separate organizations or parishes for Mexican Americans. Even on the assumption that these efforts were well intentioned, churchmen were calling for integration at a time when the two groups to be integrated were grossly unequal.

One organizational effort came out of the conference: the Bishop's Committee for the Spanish Speaking. Its initial budget was $15,000 a year for operations. Theoretically, it covered the United States, but practically, it was meant for the Southwest and specifically for Texas, where its strongest

supporter, Archbishop Robert Lucey of San Antonio resided. Active and energetic young priests like Fathers Joseph Crosthwait, Theodore Radke and John Wagner were appointed as directors and field representatives. A final assessment of this committee, however, is difficult, for it worked under many limitations, not the least of which was a shortage of staff and an adequate operating budget.

An insight into the relationship that many Mexican Americans had with their parish priests is given by one of the few Chicano priests ordained in these two decades: Patricio Flores, later to be the first Chicano bishop in the United States.

> Although the diocese of Galveston-Houston, my home diocese, is over one hundred years old and has always had more then 100,000 Mexican American Catholics, I am only the second Mexican American priest ever ordained in that diocese....Despite the fact that 85 percent of the Mexican Americans in Texas are Roman Catholics, we have only fifty-three ordained priests from among this group. The Protestants, with only 15 percent representation among the Mexican Americans in Texas, have more than 500 ordained ministers[from this group] (Flores 1971).

Father Flores confirms that, during the 1940s, some parishes still had a sign in church which read: "Last three rows for Mexicans." As a youth his dealings had been with clergy brought in from other countries, especially from Spain. Priests in the parishes where he lived sometimes called him "stupid" and implied that he came from an inferior race.

This otherwise dismal scene is brightened by the example of zealous priests such as those of the Spanish Mission Band in the San Francisco Bay area.

They represented a small, but "new breed" of Anglo priests who were ready to break away from traditional modes and institutional approaches. They said Mass in the migrant camps and spoke out for social justice. They did not hesitate to develop leadership roles for people. The "Guadalupe Chapel", which they helped to establish in east San José in 1953, became a center of activity and a symbol of hope for the Mexican people.

At the end of the 1950s, however, the Church was still, by and large, maintaining a paternalistic approach to the Mexican American. It was following a pastoral theology which was outdated and did not apply, especially to groups who were racially and culturally different from the mainstream membership of the Church. For these and other reasons, the unrest in the Church became universal. Pope John XXIII himself called for a figurative opening of its windows so that "fresh air could come in."

A TIME FOR CONFRONTATION: 1960-1978

The modern period was a time of self-assertion for the Chicano. What conditions activated this new reaction? Among them were a general climate of resistance to oppressive institutions, a more developed local leadership, and the presence of organized groups that were ready to dramatize the needs of the people. New symbols of resistance were also emerging in Cesar Chavez and Larry Itliong, who had sounded the call in 1965 from Delano for the organization of farm workers. "Basta yá!", "It is enough!" came from the urban areas. "Chicano" was now applied to a movement that demonstrated a new consciousness and the mission to end the servanthood of centuries. Reform was also at work in the Church. The bishops of the world were called to Rome for Vatican Council II and remained there at their task from 1962 to 1965.

The initial breakthrough in leadership training and new thinking for the Catholic Chicano came through the Cursillo movement. The Cursillo de Cristiandad is a three day intensive experience which combines group dynamics with instruction in the fundamentals of the Christian life. A priest is always spiritual director, but the actual leadership is in the hands of the laity. The lay people act as role models for the participants. The success of the movement is evidenced by the presence of "Cursillistas", or graduates in almost every position of Chicano lay leadership in the Church and community.

The Cursillo was introduced into California in 1961 through the efforts of the Spanish Mission Band and the Franciscans in Stockton. From there, it moved to San José and all parts of California. For the Spanish speaking it was a means of personal liberation from the servant mentality of previous

eras and their hope for a new role in the Church and society. The Bishops, however, hesitated to promote it. In the San Francisco Archdiocese, the Cursillo only came into its own when it was translated into English and an Anglo priest was named as director. The Chicano priest who had been the first director of the movement in the entire Bay Area, now remained only as unofficial director of the Spanish speaking component in the Archdiocese.

In 1962, the Guadalupe Chapel became a parish and a Chicano pastor was named: the first one in the county since 1848. Although it was not granted the status of a national parish, it received permission from Archbishop Joseph McGucken to accept Mexican people from any area "who cannot, without danger to faith and morals, be sent to the pastor of the parish where their residence is located " (Soto files, 1962). As a result, people flocked to it in great numbers. Whereas neighboring and larger parishes averaged, at the most, 200 baptisms a year, the Guadalupe Church averaged over 700 a year between 1963 and 1972. From this church, too, emerged the Chicano deacon program, the first of its kind in California. There were many other innovations too, such as the Center for Employment Training, a job training program for the unemployed and unskilled which over a ten year period has helped place thousands of the poor in good paying jobs.

Another significant organization to emerge in northern California was the Chicano Priest's Organization (hereafter CPO). In May of 1969, when Chicano organizations of Santa Clara County gathered to form the Confederación

de la Raza Unida, a federation of seventy organizations, a challenge was thrown to the Church to become relevant to the Chicano. There were only two Chicano priests in the county, both Franciscans, but a dozen or so Anglo priests working with the Spanish speaking responded and formed the CPO. The group was acutely conscious that it could play no more than a supportive role to the Chicano and paternalism was a thing of the past.

The prophetic role taken by the CPO sometimes brought it into confrontation with established bodies and with the Church itself. Thus, in a dispute between Chicanos and the City of San José over the hiring of minorities for the construction of the Community Theater, five priests went into civil disobedience and were arrested along with Chicano activists.

These priests were also instrumental in the formation of the "West Coast Coalition of Priests and Sisters working with the Spanish Speaking " which demanded concessions from the hierarchy with regard to this minority group. The Coalition later merged with another national organization of Chicano priests, PADRES. The latter was more conservative in that its main thrust was to have more Chicano bishops appointed, rather than to call for structural change in the Church.

A stormy climax characterized what was probably the beginning of the end of the CPO. The event took place on the steps of the multi-million

St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco on the day of its dedication, May 5, 1971. Chicano groups had long protested that the millions of dollars at the disposal of the Church were being used in pretentious buildings instead of for the poor. The CPO had a painful decision to make: in opposing the project they were protesting against their own bishop on whom they depended for appointments and the totality of their work. They decided to limit their protest to the insertion of a paid ad in the diocesan newspaper. When this was censored, they decided to picket in person. As the group wandered peacefully in front of the cathedral with their leaflets, a troop of the San Francisco Tactical Unit suddenly appeared in riot gear. Church officials had overreacted and called the police.

The cathedral incident was a traumatic one for the priests and a cause of great anger for the Archbishop. By 1974, nine of the most active members of this organization had resigned from the official Church structures and had taken up work in the community. All of them eventually married.

In Los Angeles, Chicanos formed "Católicos por la Raza" (Catholics for the Latin People) and picketed the Cathedral of St. Basil, another newly constructed and multi-million dollar edifice. On Christmas Eve, 1969, some 350 persons had marched around the cathedral in protest against what they considered extravagant expenditure and callous indifference to the problems of the poor. Again the police were called and five of the demonstrators were arrested.

In Sacramento, the Alianza Católica de Liberación was formed in 1976

and it confronted its bishops on matters pertaining to Chicano betterment. A climactic event took place on December 25, 1977, when members of the group occupied the vacant diocesan seminary of St. Pius in Galt, outside of Sacramento. The diocese had just announced it was trying to sell the property for 5.5 million dollars. The Chicano group insisted that the buildings be turned over, instead, to the poor as a community facility.

In the central coast county of Monterey, a group of Cursillo leaders, tired of being denied the use of church facilities, organized themselves in 1976 to purchase an entire building for use as a Cursillo and community center. Since they controlled the use of the building, they did not hesitate to invite in married priests who had expertise in Cursillo work to help them.

The permanent deacon program is also significant because it provides a model of the structural change that can take place in the Church. In this plan, laymen, married or single, can be ordained to dispense many of the sacraments and still retain their style of life in the community. They do not go on to the ordained priesthood.

The priests at the Guadalupe Church in San José took immediate interest when it was approved by the Vatican Council in 1967 and by the American bishops a year later. The leadership in the parish began a program according to the realistic needs of the community, knowing full well that the bishops would modify it later. Both men and women were accepted, young people down to the age of

25 could become candidates, there was no restriction on celibacy, the community chose its candidates subject to approval of the bishop, and their work was to be community oriented rather than parochial. Finally, it was considered a step to the married priesthood.

When the institutional Church took it over, it eliminated the women, raised the age to 35, forbade single or widowers to remarry, gave the choice of candidates to the bishop alone, and oriented the work to the parish. The deacon status, furthermore, was to be permanent.

Although some break-throughs were initiated within the Church during this period, for many, the Church remained basically traditional and structurally unchanged. New directions began to be sought by some Chicanos. With them were many disillusioned members of the Anglo Community. Among these latter were organizations of resigned priests such as those of the Fellowship of Christian Ministry. This organization began as a national group of married priests who sought recognition by the institutional Church, but later changed its direction to include unordained and women in the search for new forms of ministry.

There have been no scientific surveys of Chicanos regarding their attitudes toward a married clergy. But on April 9, 1971, the Guadalupe Church sponsored a panel discussion on optional celibacy for priests. Some 230 Mexican people from all over San José attended. At the end of the dicussion, there was a standing vote of approval given to optional celibacy for priests. Similar expressions of approval were given at other gatherings of people, signaling

that support of this direction is not new.

Other groups are going beyond the married priesthood to the exercise of the baptismal priesthood of the community. Catholic Chicano groups are meeting regularly in San José and other places for their own liturgies. No distinction is made between ordained and unordained, men or women in the leadership of these liturgies. Bread and wine is blessed and shared in scriptural fashion, marriages are witnessed and baptisms are performed. No interest is evinced, however, in forming a separate Church since all members are still practicing as Catholics. They look upon this, instead, as another type of ecclesial assembly and, perhaps, even the Church of the future.

CHICANOS AND THE CHURCH: AN ANAYLSIS

The ethnic stratification that was found in all periods of the Church's history paralleled that of institutions in secular society. What was really significant was not this fact, but that the Church claimed to be more than human and to have more than human means at its disposal in dealing with the contradictions found in other institutions. What we set out to do was to make a historical and sociological analysis of the consequent non-participation of the Mexican American in the structures of the Church.

In terms of the relativity of culture and within a framework of a system of dominant-subordinate relationships, it was not considered acceptable to place the blame for the non-participation on the subordinate groups. In terms of a group's right to its culture and the importance of ethnicity to personal and group identity, neither was assimilation acceptable as a solution. What had to be taken into consideration was the unique, historical experience of the Mexican American, the long history of subordination endured by this people, the political dimension involved, and the non-European origin of the Mexican value system underlying that culture.

The basic assumption here was that the Mexican was not just an immigrant minority, but a subordinated minority that was very well aware of its condition. The Mexican American saw the Church as belonging to a social structure that excluded him and other non-conforming minorities.

The economic system of pre-American California also put the Mexican

at a great disadvantage. It was a pre-industrial economy based on cattle raising and agriculture for home use and occasional trading. Cash was little used. The ethos was Indo-Hispanic. Moreover, the static conception of life and religion preached by the traditional religions of the time did little other than provide legitimation for the status quo.

European Americans, on the other hand, came to California in great numbers and with the benefits of the Industrial Revolution. They had inherited the Puritan ethic which legitimized the nascent capitalism. The race-superiority theories of the nineteenth century gave direction and the needed rationale for the westward movement. They had also accumulated the capital and financial structures which were necessary for the rapid expansion of a business empire. The gold finds added to this capital. The rapid industrialization and urbanization of the East had helped them develop a mental set that was favorable to a business oriented and politically sophisticated society. Thus it was that when mining and agriculture developed in California, eastern investors were ready with capital and corporate structures to participate.

The Americans were strong enough to brook no competition from the Mexicans; they drove them out when necessary and their ethnocentrism justified it. Much of their enabling power also came from their idea system. Thus it was that, as the research went on, we found ourselves emphasizing more and more the ideology of a people in the resulting marginalization of the Mexican people -- this, in addition to the original variables of ~~our~~ conceptual framework: ethnocentrism, competition, and differential power.

As a result of these factors, a process of inferiorization rapidly took hold. It was seen in the writings of the mine superintendents of New Almaden, the pronouncements of Archbishop Hanna and the signs in church which read, "Last three rows for Mexicans." In the eyes of race-conscious Americans, the more Indian features of the Mexican immigrants after 1910 were a sign of inferiority. These viewpoints also helped to justify the continued importation of low paid labor in every decade of the twentieth century except during the Great Depression.

Why was there so little resistance during the century prior to 1960 on the part of the Mexican American? We speak here of resistance to a subordinated position in the Church because historical research is uncovering a great deal of resistance by the Mexican American to the depressed economic condition of his work. Thus, there is evidence of strikes as far back as the 1860s in the mines of New Almadén (Soto 1978:82-88).

One reason is that there was a mutual relation of marginality between the Mexican American and the Church. The Mexican practiced a kind of folk-Catholicism which did not depend on support for its existence on the institutional Church. Into the outlying communities, whether in Mexico or the United States, the priest might come once a year to dispense the sacraments, but other than that, life went on as usual -- and it was intensely religious. In addition, there was the harsh reality of trying to survive from day to day.

For the Mexican, religion was of more importance that the Church, although both were linked together. Although his contact with the institutional

Church was sporadic and reserved for formal occasions, religion played an important and integrative role in bringing together disparate and chaotic realities into a somewhat meaningful system. For the migrant in the desert, it was reason to continue to survive. Individuals whose families had been disrupted through tragedy and who had to strike off alone in search of work, looked upon a Divine Providence as a motivating force against despair. This was certainly the case in the life history of Geronima Marquez. Even today, in the middle of the Arizona desert, between Tucson and Phoenix,there is a small ranch where undocumented workers in homemade leather sandals and dusty clothes pause to pray before a small shrine of the Virgen de Guadalupe and leave an offering for no one in particular. Thus, in this culture, there are cognitive and evaluative components dealing with elements from pre-hispanic days, Spanish institutional models of the Church, and pre-industrial modes of living and thinking. The values involved here would exist in parallel fashion with those "taught" to them by the institutional Church.

The Church also used control mechanisms which are common to institutions that strive to keep ordinate-superordinate relationships unchanged. Thus, throughout this period, Anglos were named as directors of hispanic projects. It seems clear that they saw themselves as called to lead the Mexican in a direction chosen by Anglos. Anglos were named as diocesan directors of the Spanish speaking, pastorships of large Mexican parishes were given to them, they were appointed directors of Spanish speaking Cursillo movements, and they directed Catholic agencies whose clientele was mostly Mexican American.

Bishop Juan Arzube of Los Angeles tried to reassure the bishops of the California region that they needn't fear that "Hispanics would try to dominate the decision making if given the opportunity " (Monitor 1977:1).

Other practices used by the Church that amounted to control mechanisms were cooptation of the subordinate leadership and what Glock calls the "derailmen of resistance" (1973:302). He refers to appeals that are made to the afterlife as a focus of attention in the midst of turmoil. Thus, much of the preaching in the long years before 1960 was of this type and was even heard during the 1977-1978 survey of the Spanish Masses in Santa Clara County (Soto 1978: 245-254). Churchmen also "derail" the opposition by setting up models of what a "good Mexican" is.

Many Mexicans had also internalized the image of themselves held by the dominant majority. Expressions are still heard such as "Tu sabes como somos nosotros los mexicanos" (You know how we Mexicans are). This usually means, "We don't work together like the Americans do", or "if we are so far behind, it is our own fault", or "anyone can make it if he really tries". This type of false consciousness would also deprive many of the need to make critical judgments regarding their subordinate position with regard to the Church and society in general.

Lack of resistance has also been attributed to a form of alienation based on a feeling of powerlessness. This need not be an objective powerlessness, but a perceived inability to influence greatly the outcome of events.

When the means at hand are not adequate to the task of helping one reach a goal, then they are not used and there is apparent inactivity until such means are available (Seeman 1959:784). Alienation, in this sense, might help to explain some of the lack of resistance until the time when the Mexican became more numerous in the 1960s and there was more hope of successful resistance.

Reactive adjustment can take many forms other than direct resistance. Most often, it takes the form of accomodation to existing situations. Thus, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Santa Clara County Mexicans accomodated themselves to their low position in society by living together in small colonies associated with mining and agriculture. Others reacted by striving for that assimilation which the dominant society held out to them. This was seen in the case of the families that moved into the city from New Almaden and who began to call themselves "Spanish" instead of Mexican.

It would be a mistake, on the other hand, to reduce the institutional Church to too minimal a role in the lives of these people. The Church, for many, was the key symbol that brought meaningfulness to life. It furnished the framework for the religious education of children, the celebration of important life events, and held the final say in problematic situations of life. It also served as a cohesive and controlling moral force that helped to hold family and community together. The fact that key figures in the institutional Church were almost always members of another ethnic group was either not questioned or it was rationalized in a way that did not demand much explanation.

There were other pressing matters to attend to.

A major study on the Church and the Chicano in southern California acknowledges the paternalism of the Church, but states that, with regard to the marginal role of the Mexican American, there was "an inadequacy of resources available to the Church in the Southwest" (Grebler, Moore, Guzmán 1970:449). By this it is meant that there was a lack of personnel and the necessary finances for what the Church wanted to do.

In general, it may be true that the Church did not have adequate resources in the immediate locale where it wished to operate because the people were poor, but as an international organization, the Church had many resources elsewhere. It could draw on clergy from Europe and other parts of the United States. Missionary societies like the American Board of Missions and the Catholic Extension Society raised large sums of money for Church projects in the Southwest. In northern California, the Jesuits were able to go to Italy and recruit highly qualified instructors for their new college in Santa Clara. Alemany was able to go to Ireland and bring back well-educated priests for his parishes and chancery. Affluent Catholics in the Santa Clara Valley, of his day, like Myles O'Connor and Martin Murphy, were generous in their donation of hospitals and schools for the Church. Therefore, it is difficult to say that, in northern California at least, the Church lacked adequate resources to help the Mexican people. This would be true, not only when the Mexican population was small before 1940, but also when it became large after that date.

The policy of not allowing national parishes for Mexican Americans is an important factor in understanding the subordinate status of this people. Integration cannot come about except through a process of equalization. Without this process, domination occurs since groups are unequal when brought together.

European immigrants, as a rule, were able to wrest concessions from the hierarchy regarding national parishes and national customs. They also had their own priests. The fact that they settled in highly urbanized areas also contributed to the possibility of organizing themselves for the attainment of these objectives.

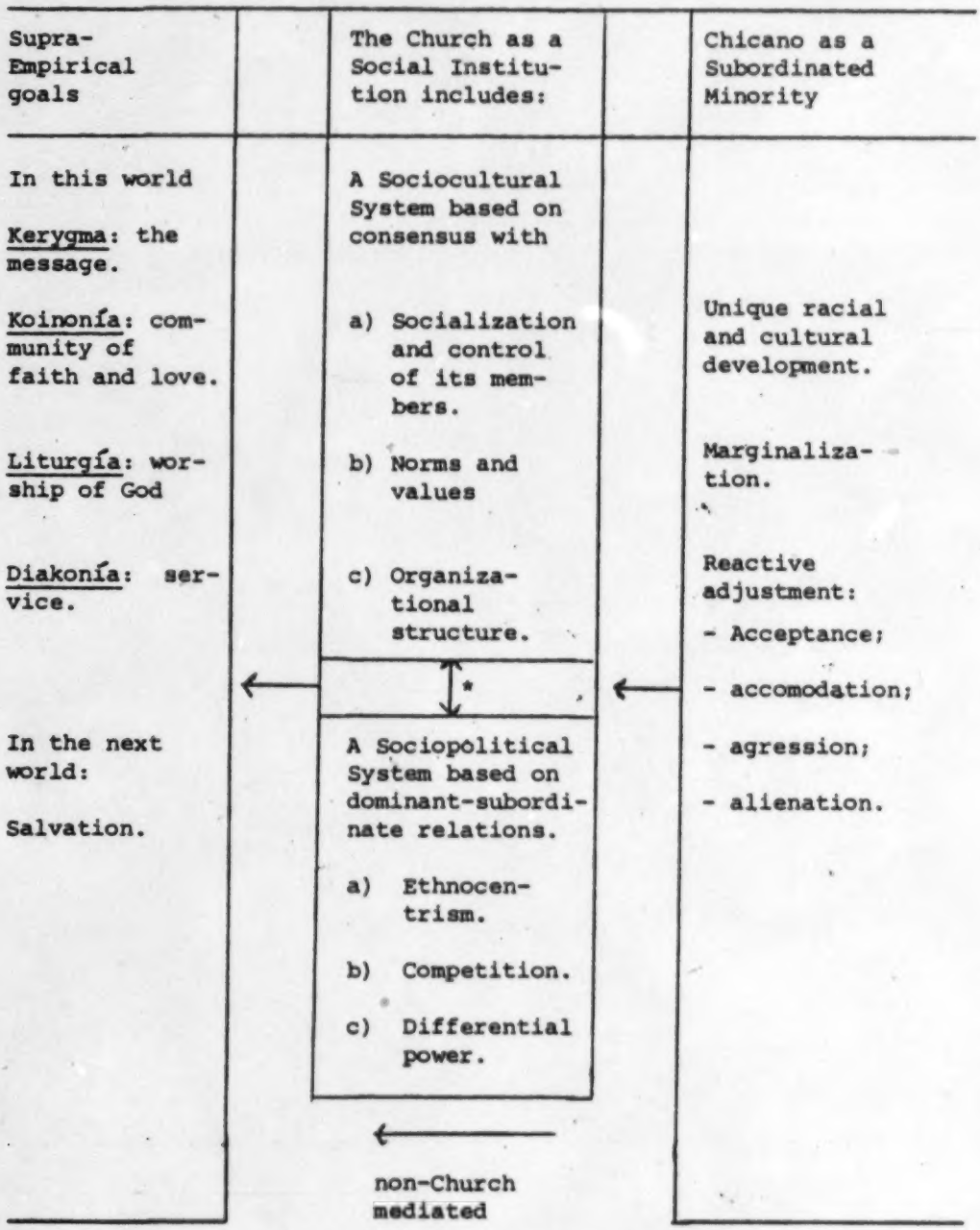
Ethnicity need not be divisive. It can, on the contrary, lead to the formation of groups, each strong in its own right, contributing to the unity and integration of the whole body. The Irish-Germanic dominance in the Church hierarchy has actually weakened the Church by depriving it of the richness and strength that can come from a diversity of cultures. The assimilationistapproach of the Church toward the Mexican American has also deprived this subordinate group of their right to cultural space in the Church. It is for this reason that Mexican Americans are still calling for their own structures in the Church, whether this be of the Cursillo movement, the deacon program or that of another organization. Groups like PADRES are calling for more than national parishes. They have called for a national Chicano Church, not in the sense of a Church separate from that of the Catholic, but for a degree of autonomy and self-determination within the Church.

A real problem was created for the Mexican American by the fact that the Church reflected the value system of the dominant society. The Church acted as a "filter" between the Mexican and the supra-empirical goals of the Christian religion -- and it did so very imperfectly. It thus presented political and cultural barriers to the aspirations of the Mexican which tended to alienate him from the Church. This alienation, pent-up for many decades, exploded in militant fashion during the 1960s in the form of demonstrations against the Church. The malaise, also felt by members of the majority society due to the slowness of reform, resulted in a large exodus of the Church's clerical and religious personnel. It tended to support the claim of the Mexican American that there was true cause for the alienation that had been felt for generations.

The Church is seen as having two component parts: a sociocultural and a sociopolitical system. As a social system, it presents structural obstacles to the integration of the Mexican American into its system. As a cultural system, it reflects the culture of the European-based Anglo. As an organizational system it presents bureaucratic obstacles that are seen as more important than the spiritual good of its members. As a sociopolitical system, it contains elements of conflict that are not unlike the processes that go on in secular institutions. Table 1 can be studied as a summary of the

TABLE 1

SOCIOLOGICAL MODEL OF THE CHURCH AS A MEDIATORY STRUCTURE BETWEEN ITS SUPRA-EMPIRICAL GOALS AND THE CHICANO



*Tension between consensus and conflict.

framework that has been verified by our study. The conclusion that this study arrives at is that ethnic stratification in the Church has been based on an inflexibility of structures (institutionalism), ethnocentrism (cultural dominance), competition and differential power (dominant-subordinate relationships) with the dominant group having attitudes of paternalism and clericalism and the minority reactively adjusting in various modes. In spite of this, the Church has also played a positive and integrative role in the lives of many Mexican Americans.

The implication of all the preceding is that the Church must search for a new paradigm on which to base an understanding of itself. The traditional, institutional model has not served the Chicano well. It has even been oppressive, although its positive contributions have also been noted. The new model of the Church should include a flexibility that will provide for a new understanding of minority groups. The new model should also include features of the model that is forming in Latin America, namely, that the Church also has a prophetic role to transform, where need be, the structures of society, even in a radical manner.

A new theology is also needed which will provide new forms of ministry, especially those which can be exercised by indigenous people. Provision should also be made for leadership in the liturgical ministry which can be based on the baptismal priesthood of the community.

Structural reform that leads to a diminution of clericalism and paternalism is also called for by a study of Chicano-Church relationships.

The permanent diaconate is a step in the right direction, but procedures have to be adopted which will prevent it from being coopted by the institutionalists in the Church. The ordained priesthood itself must be re-structured: otherwise the reform will simply consist of a substitution of brown faces for white ones. Alternatives to the present system are: optional celibacy for priests, limited time commitments of service within the institutional Church, the non-exclusion of women from the diaconate and priesthood, and, in general, the adoption of new life styles for the clergy. The new structures should also open up new channels of participation for the people, especially for minorities, that will promote shared responsibility and help diminish the historical dominant-subordinate relationships that occurred.

New self-understandings are also needed by Chicanos. If they do not succumb to modernization and cultural dominance, they can take a prophetic role in the transformation of the Church. Their position on the institutional margin of the Church probably gives them an advantage over those at the core or it, for marginality carries with it the freedom to experiment with new forms of social and religious change. Their increasing size as a proportion of Church membership will give an added impact to whatever contribution they make.

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